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Hertz

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(54) **STORAGE AND SERVING CONTAINER
HAVING CONVERTIBLE BASE**

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This patent is subject to a terminal disclaimer.

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(22) Filed: **Mar. 29, 2015**

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(60) Provisional application No. 61/580,638, filed on Dec. 27, 2011.

(51) **Int. Cl.**
B65D 21/08 (2006.01)
B65B 61/24 (2006.01)
B65B 5/06 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC . **B65D 21/08** (2013.01); **B65B 5/06** (2013.01);
B65B 61/24 (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
CPC B65D 21/08; B65B 61/24; B65B 5/06
See application file for complete search history.

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Primary Examiner — Rena L Dye

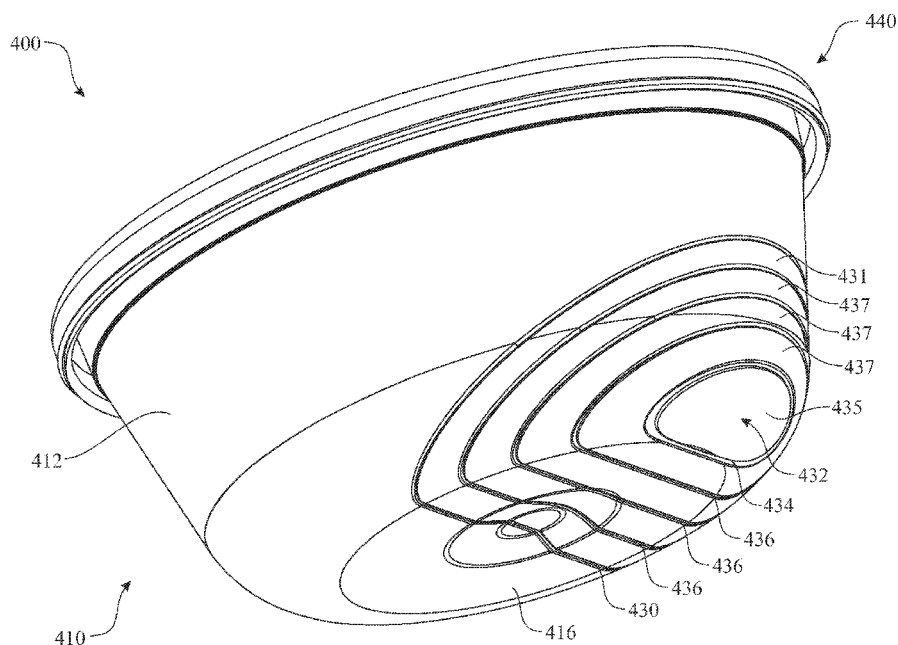
Assistant Examiner — Chaim Smith

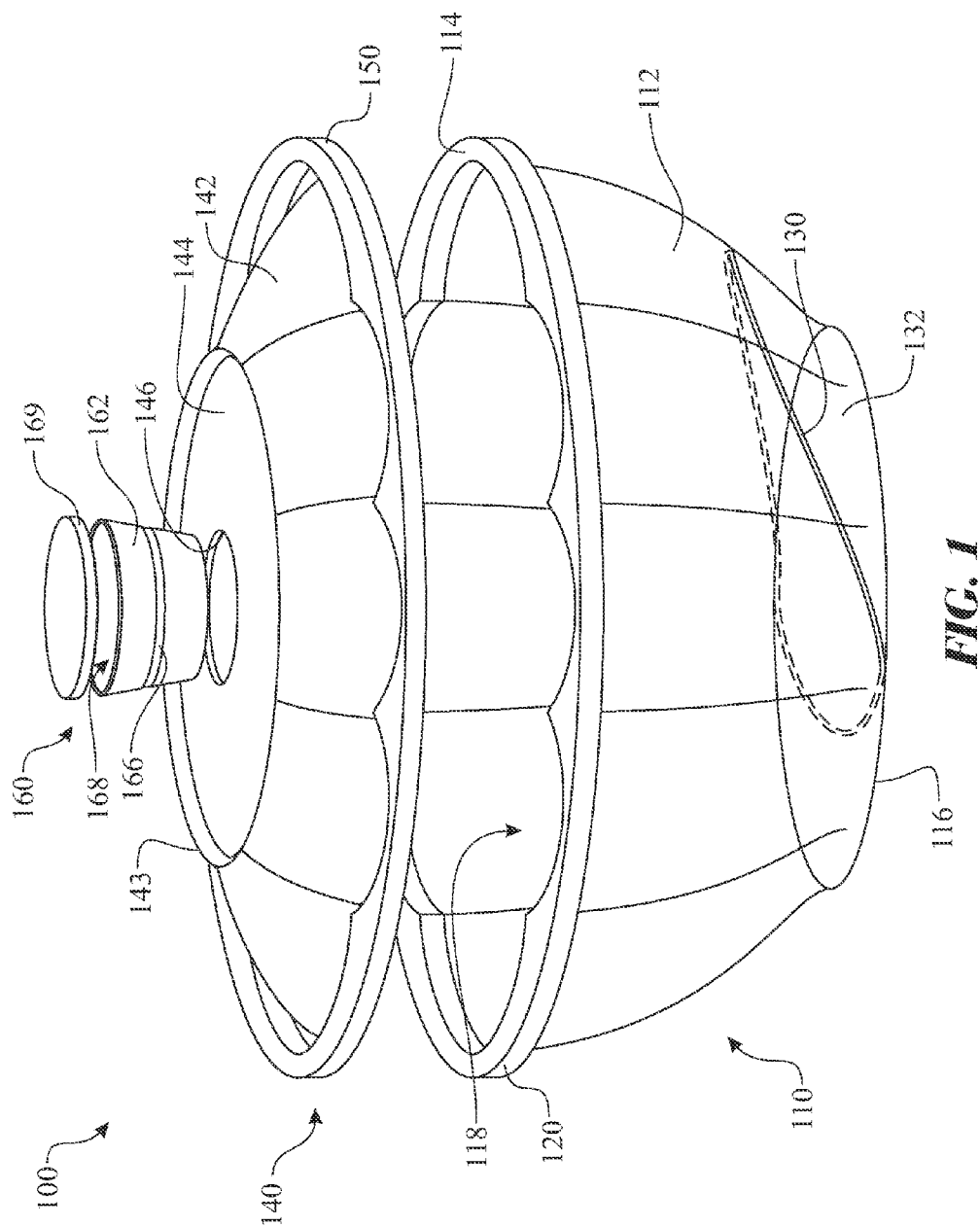
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A carry out food container assembly comprising a container body and a removable cover. The container body includes a conversion demarcation, which defines a conversion section. The conversion section includes a portion of a sidewall of the container body and a bottom portion of the container body. The user would depress the conversion section inward creating a new container body support surface, wherein the new support surface tilts an opening of the container body. A condiment container receptacle can be integrated into the cover to retain a condiment container assembly. This associates the condiment with the contents of the bowl. The container body and lid can include a stacking interface enabling one to attach a second bowl onto a cover of a first bowl. The conversion section can employ a single section or a series of sections, wherein the series of sections enable an accordion styled formation when collapsed.

20 Claims, 18 Drawing Sheets





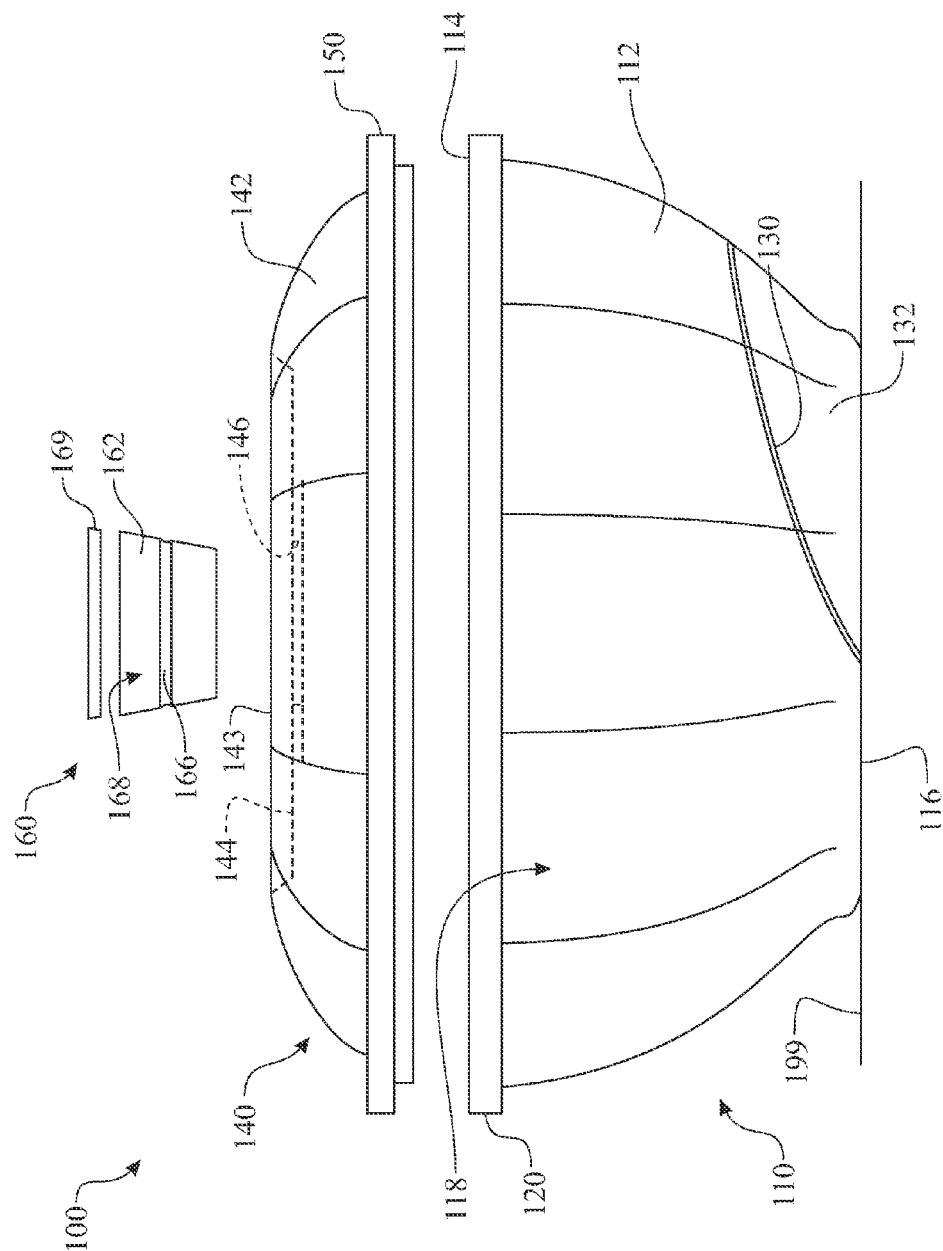


FIG. 2

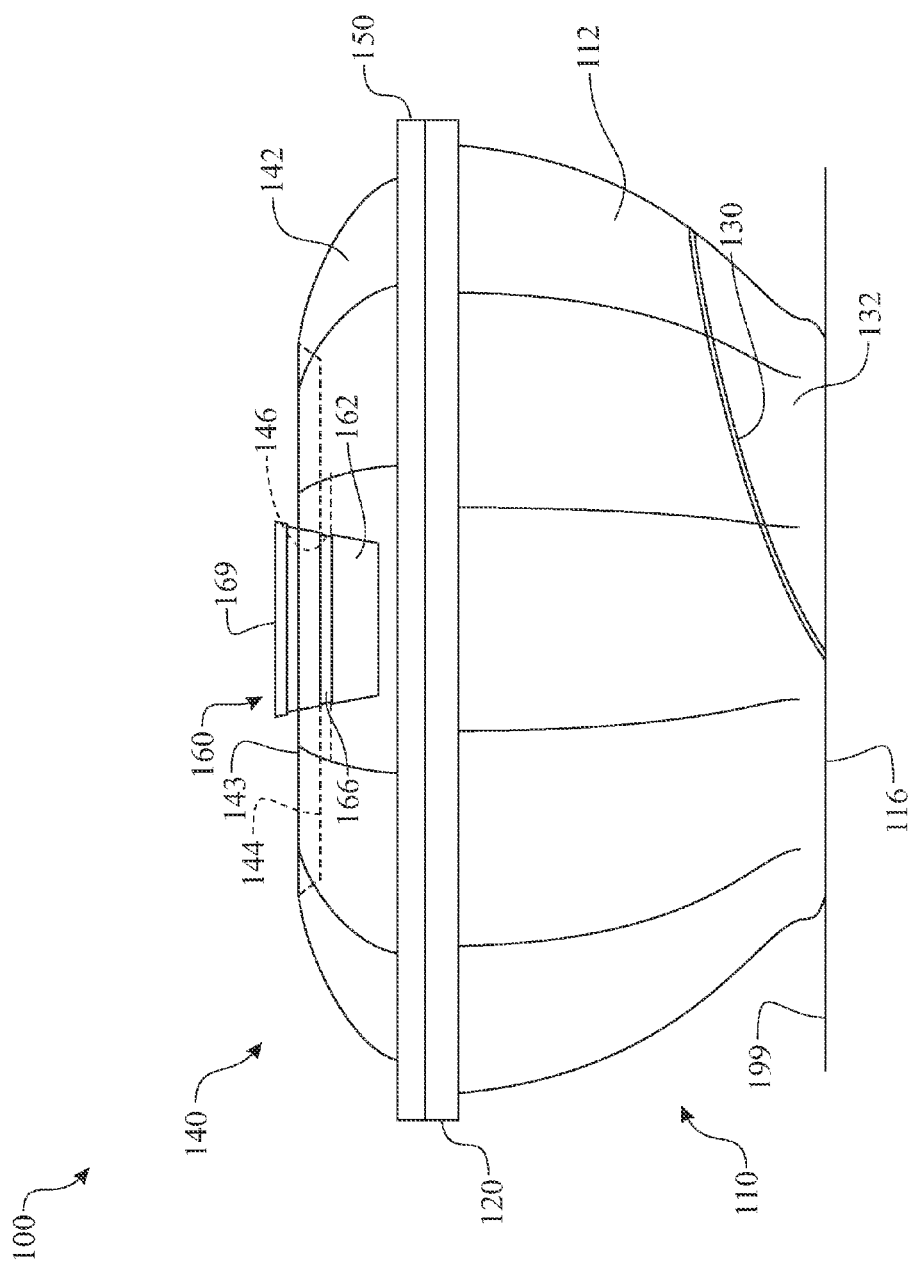


FIG. 3

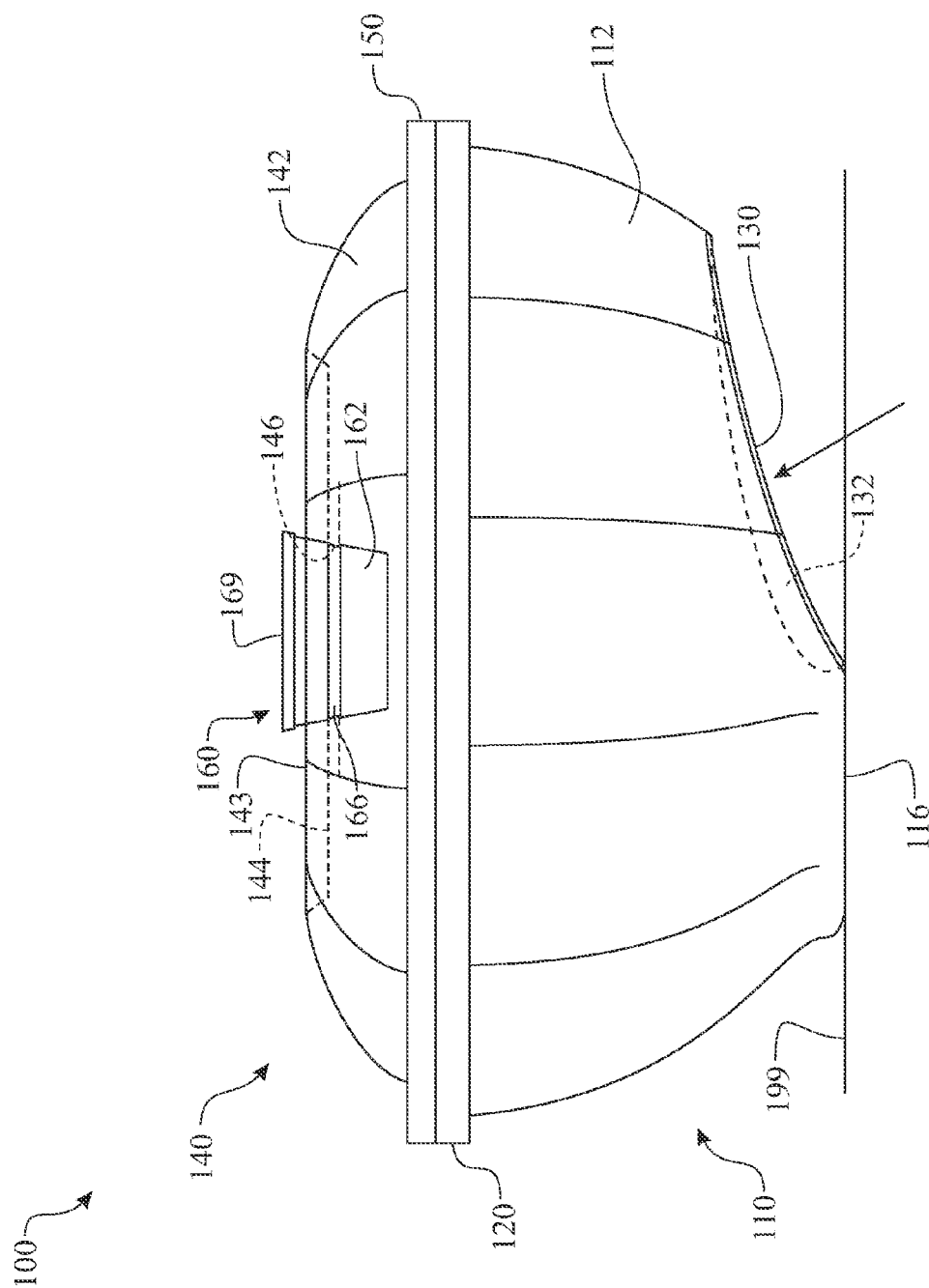


FIG. 4

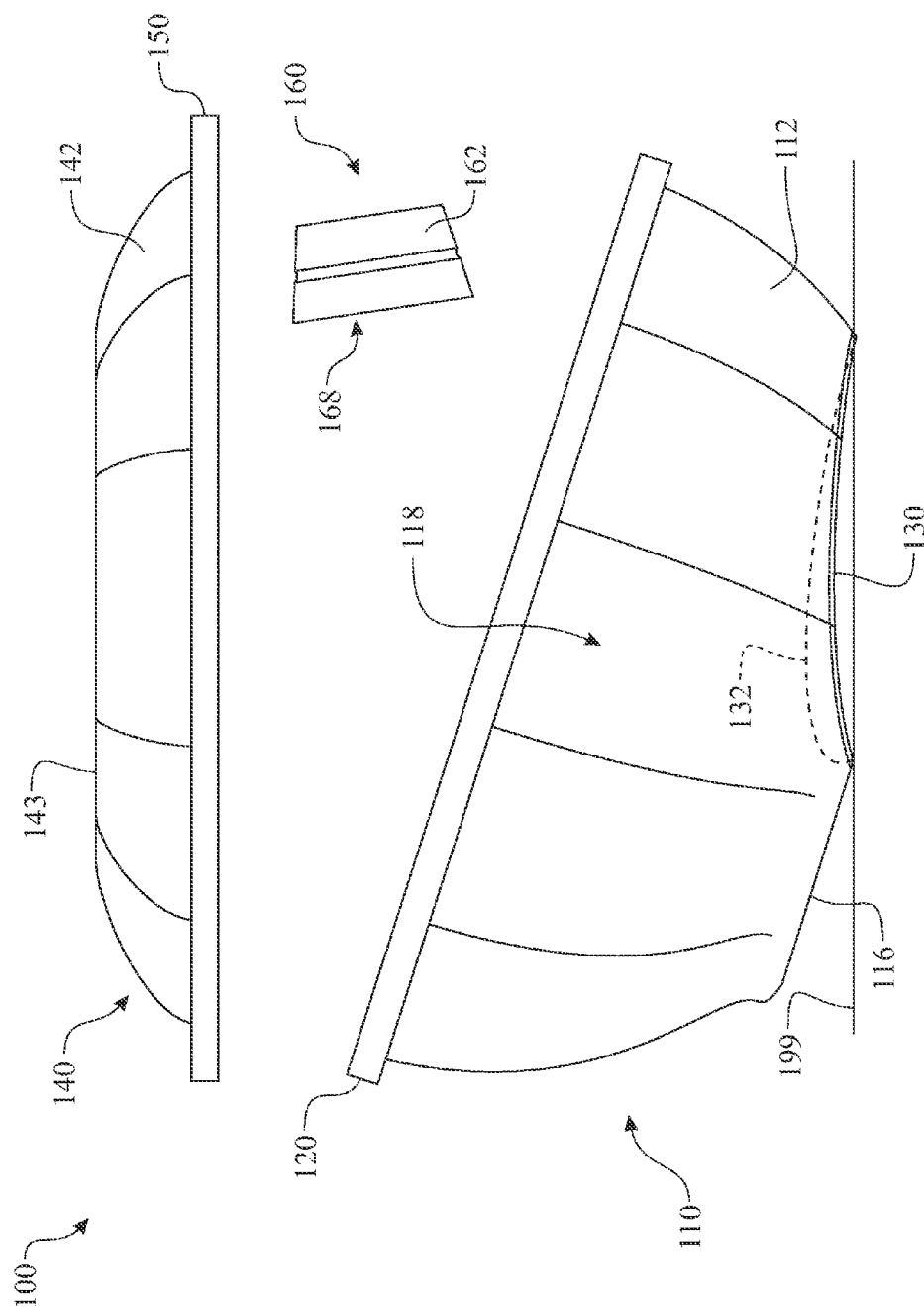


FIG. 5

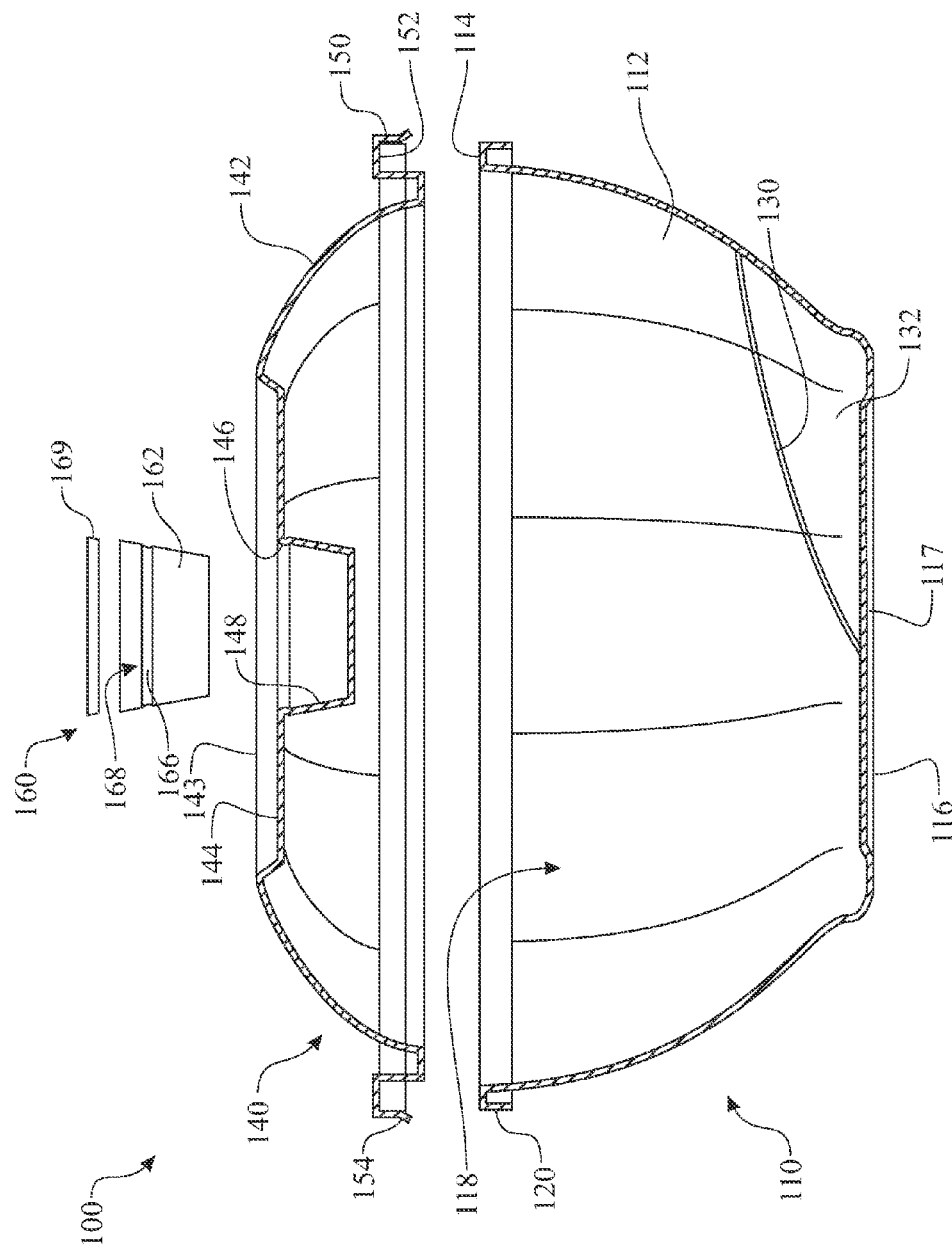


FIG. 6

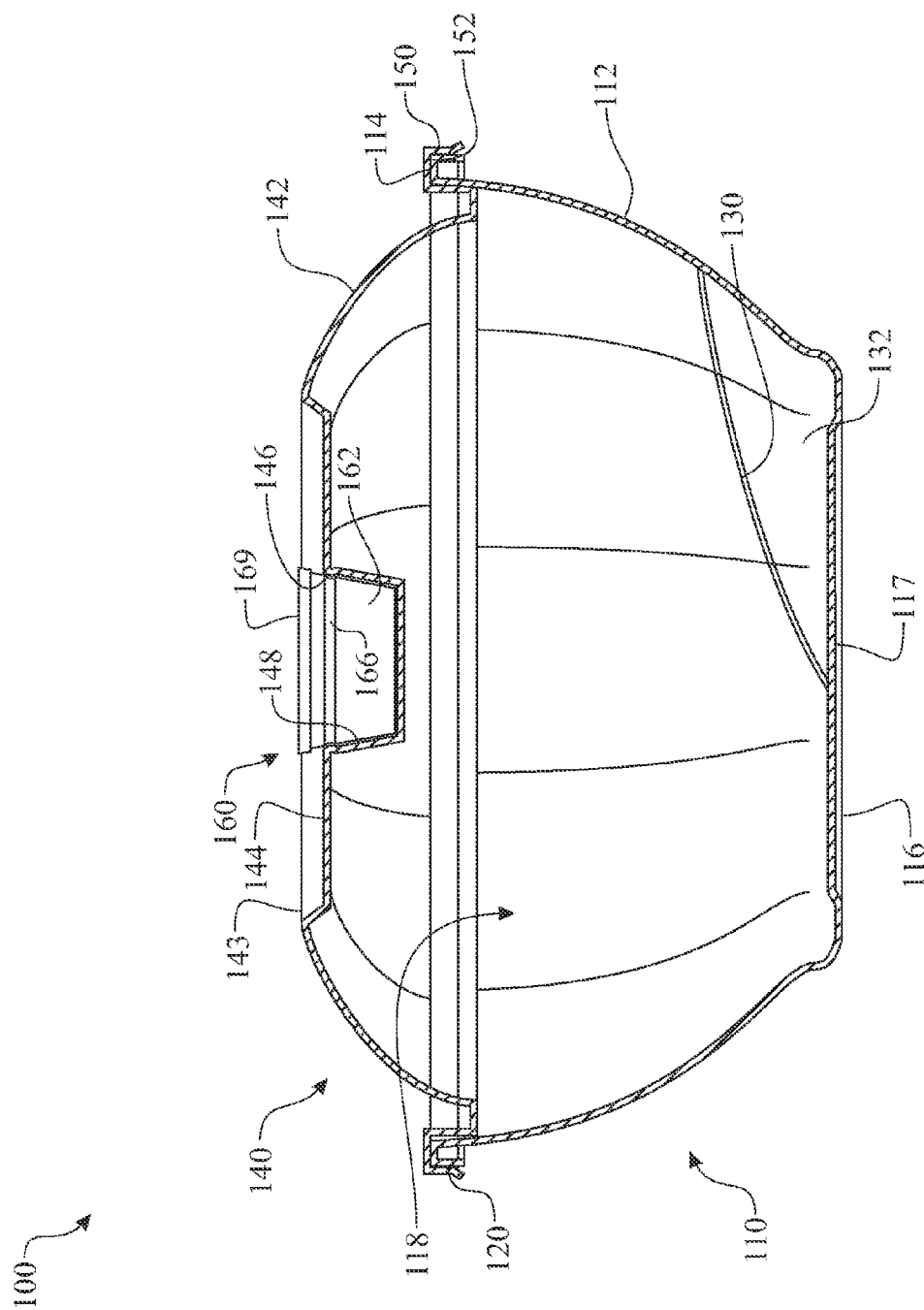


FIG. 7

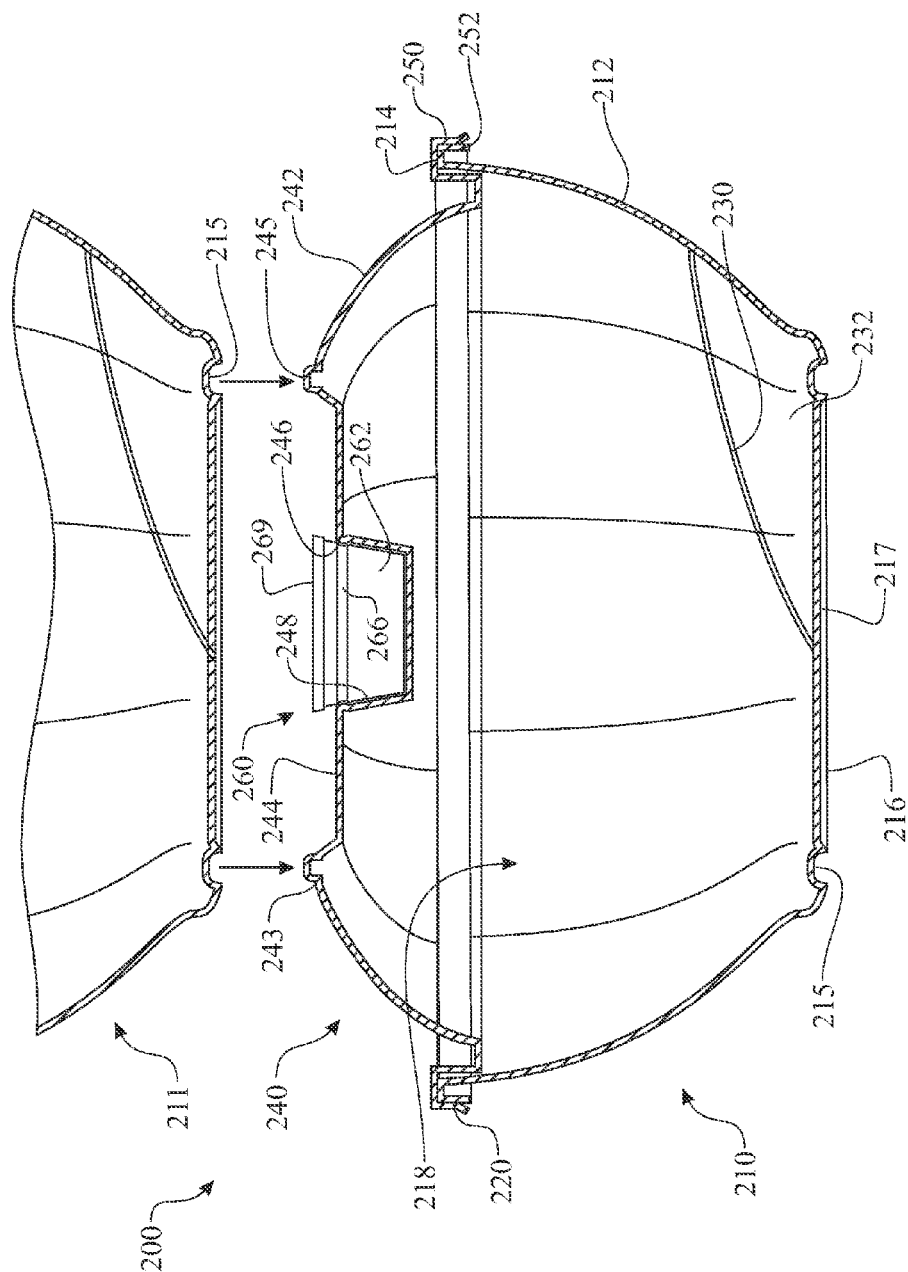


FIG. 8

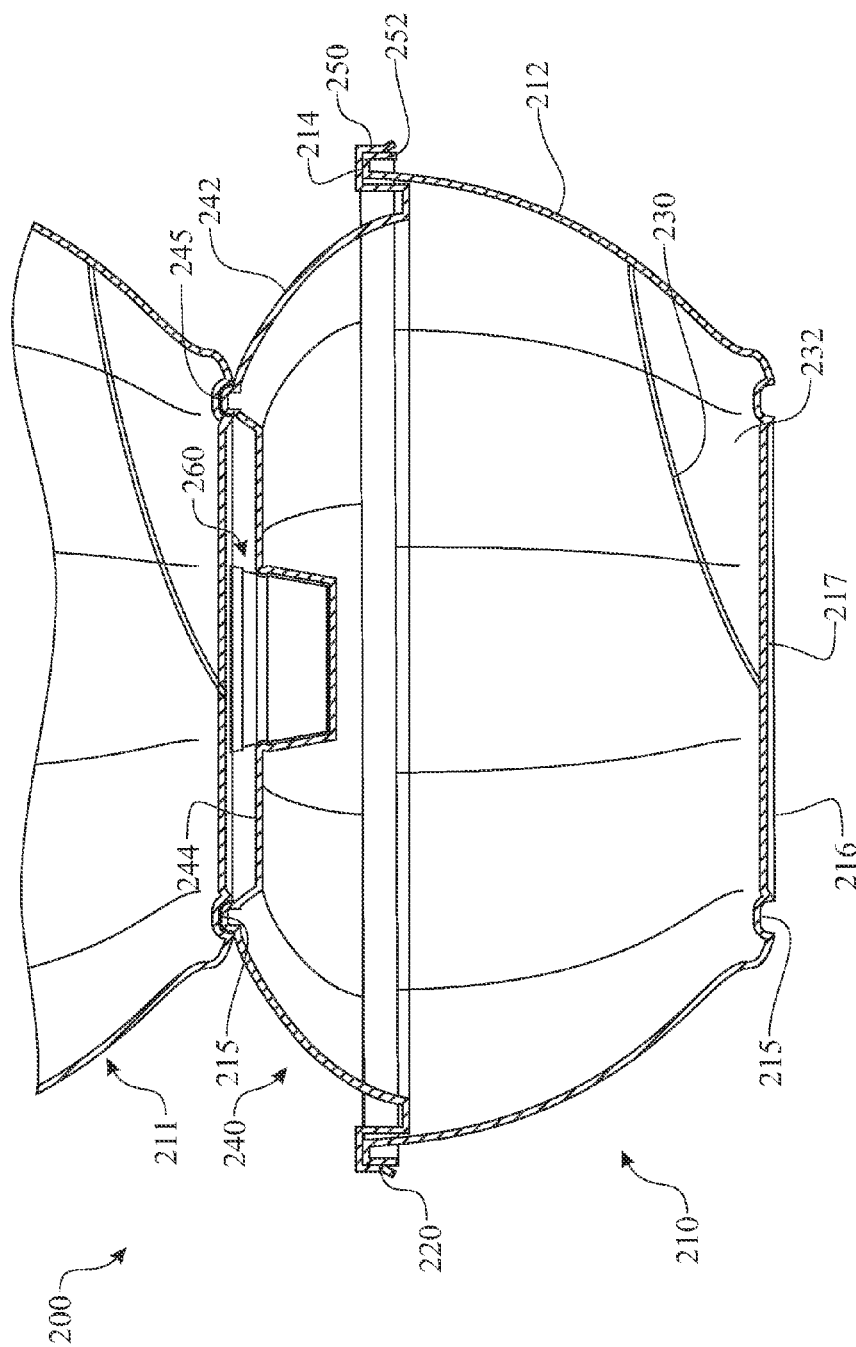


FIG. 9

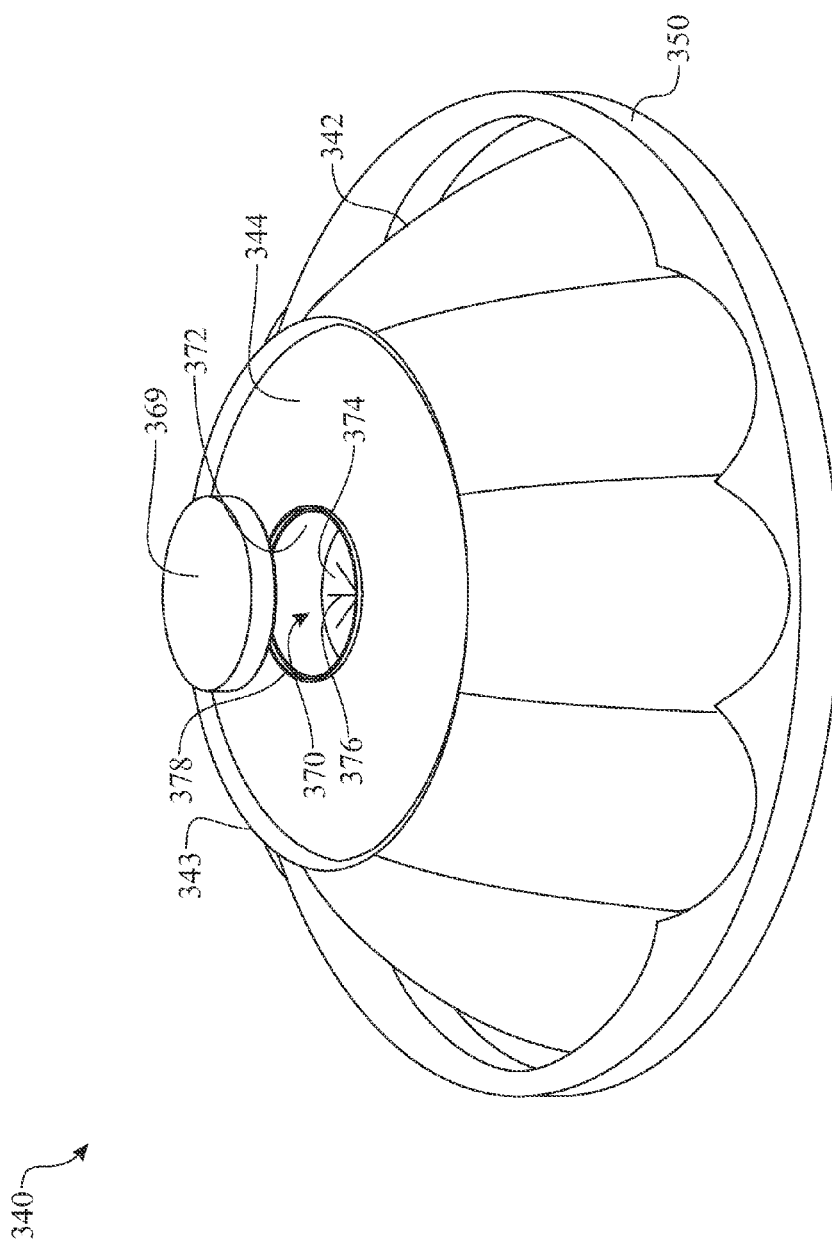


FIG. 10

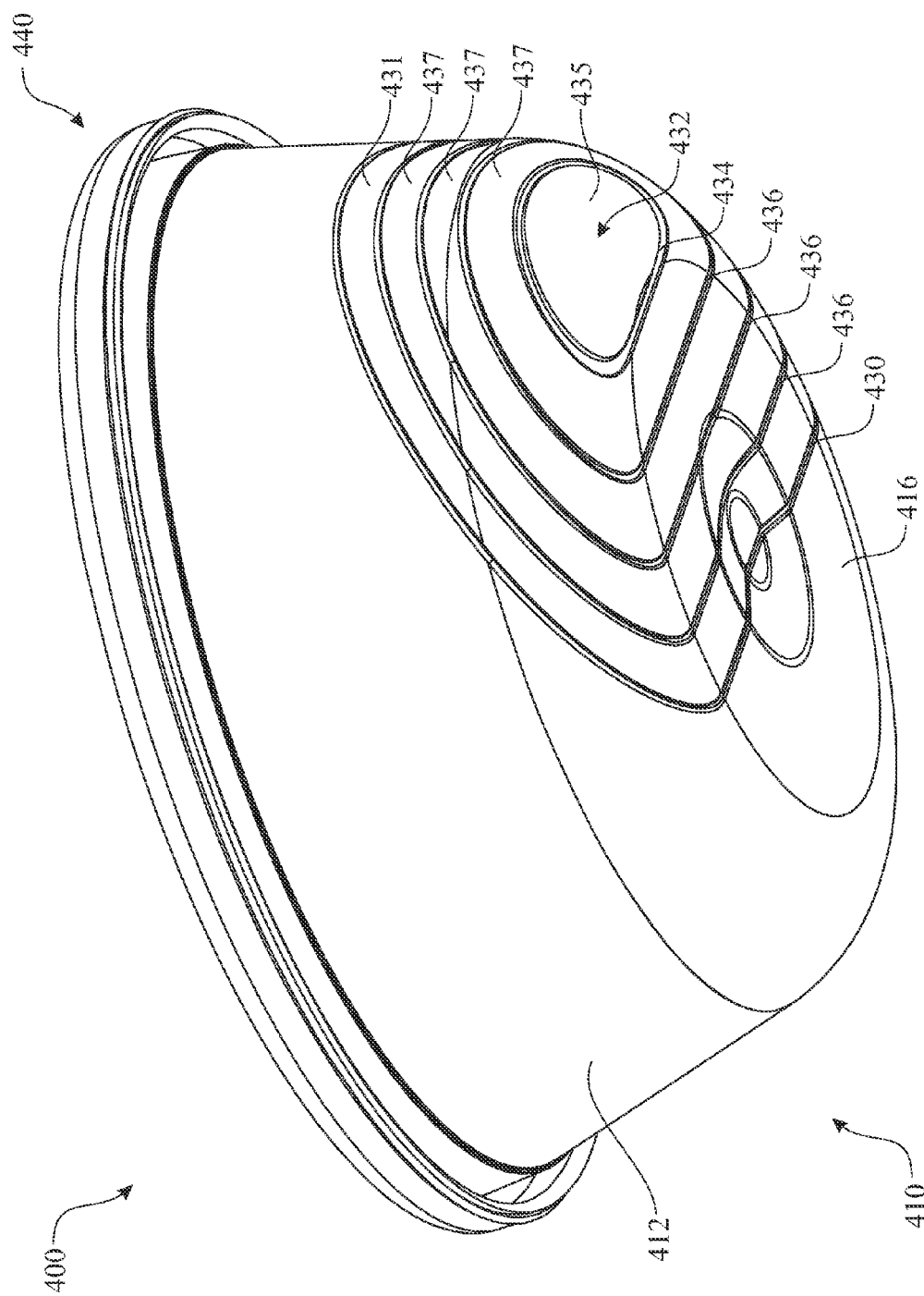


FIG. 11

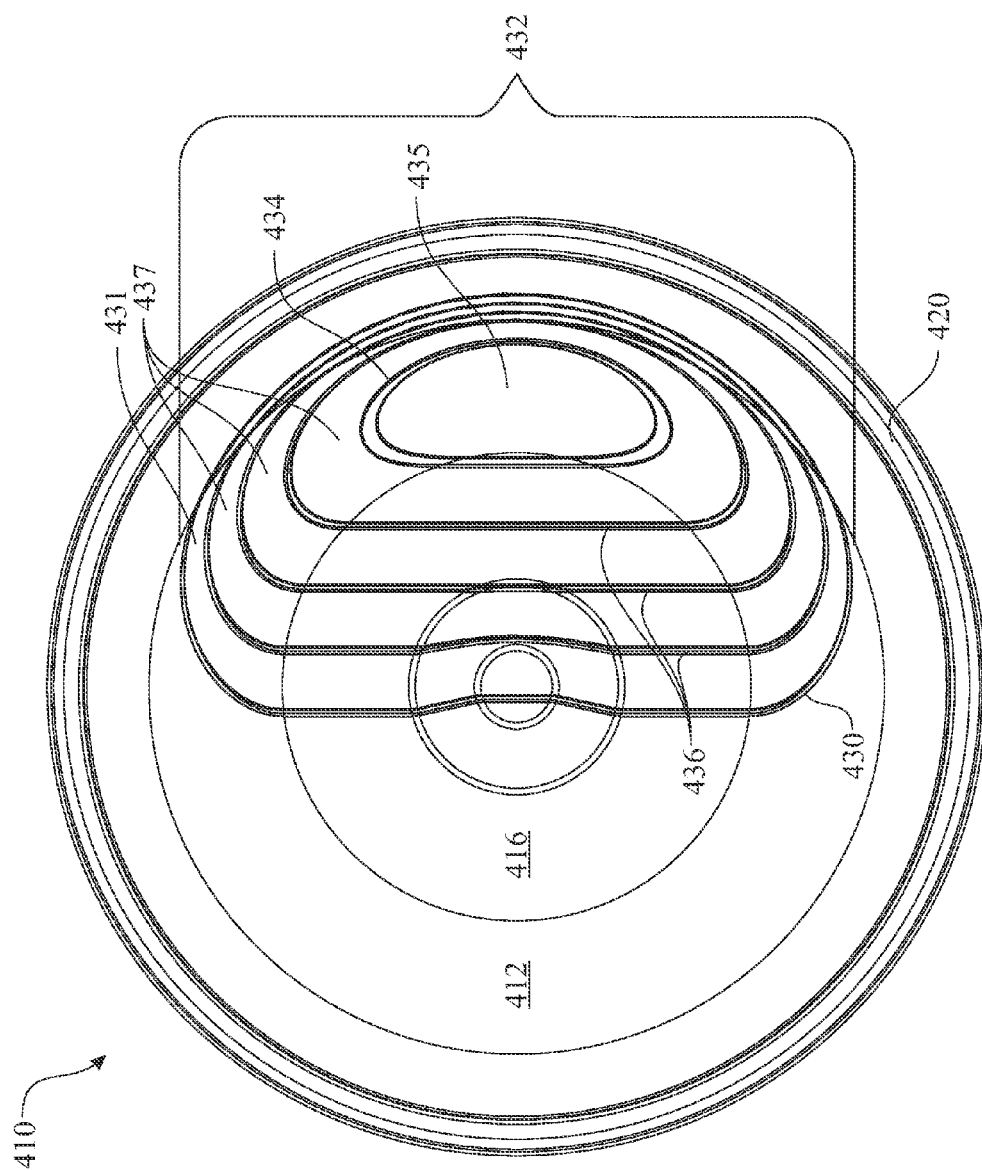


FIG. 12

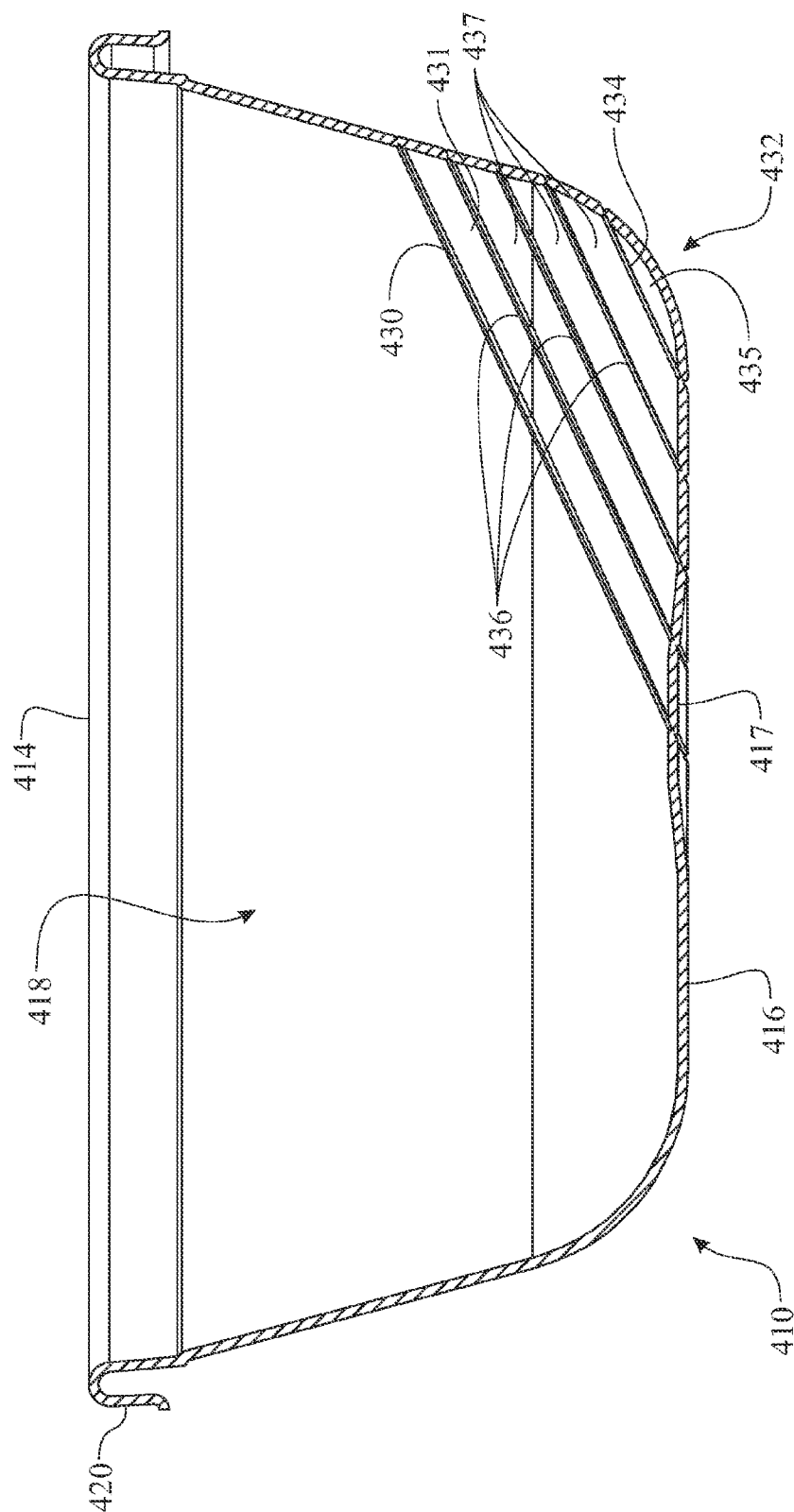
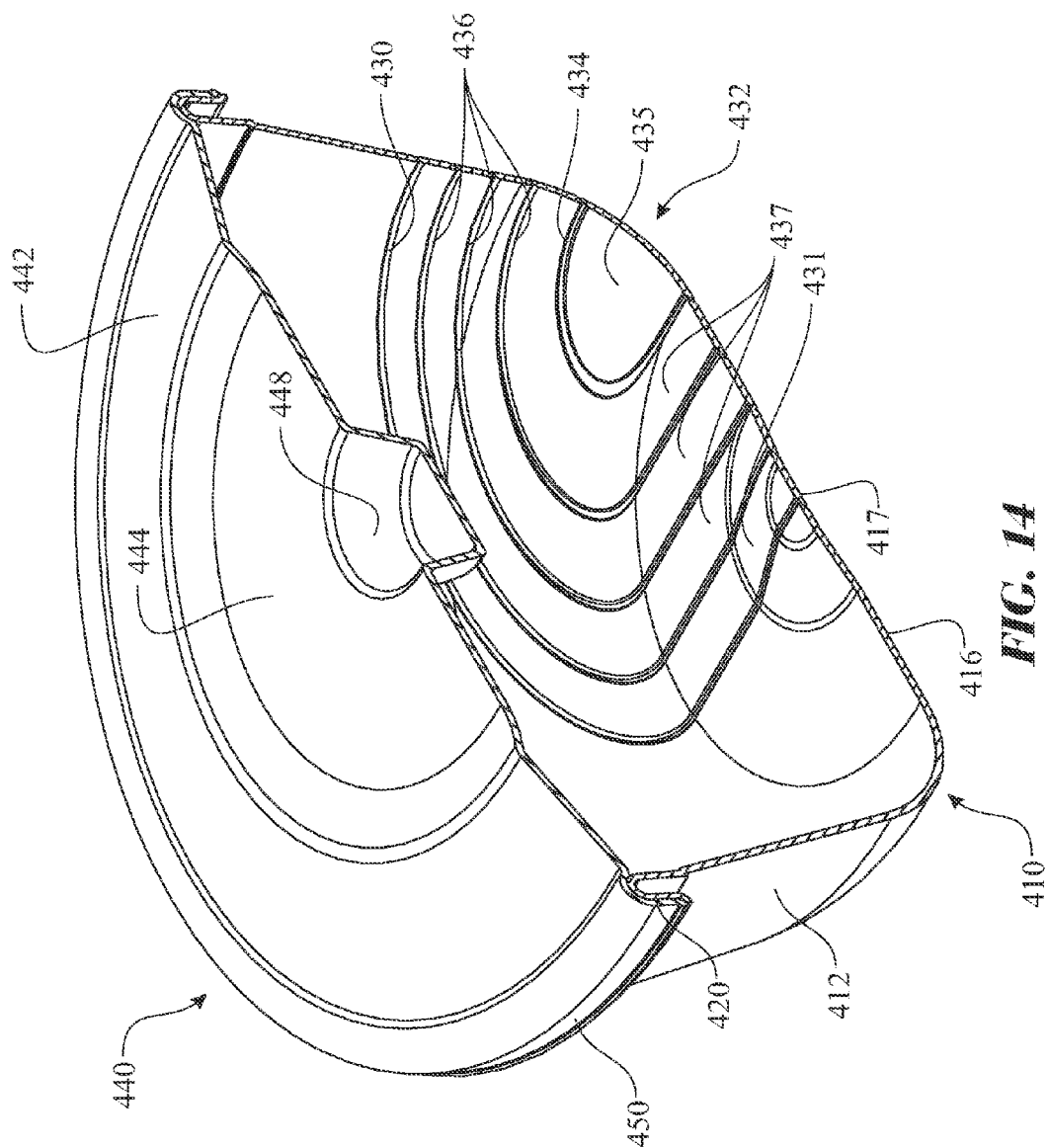
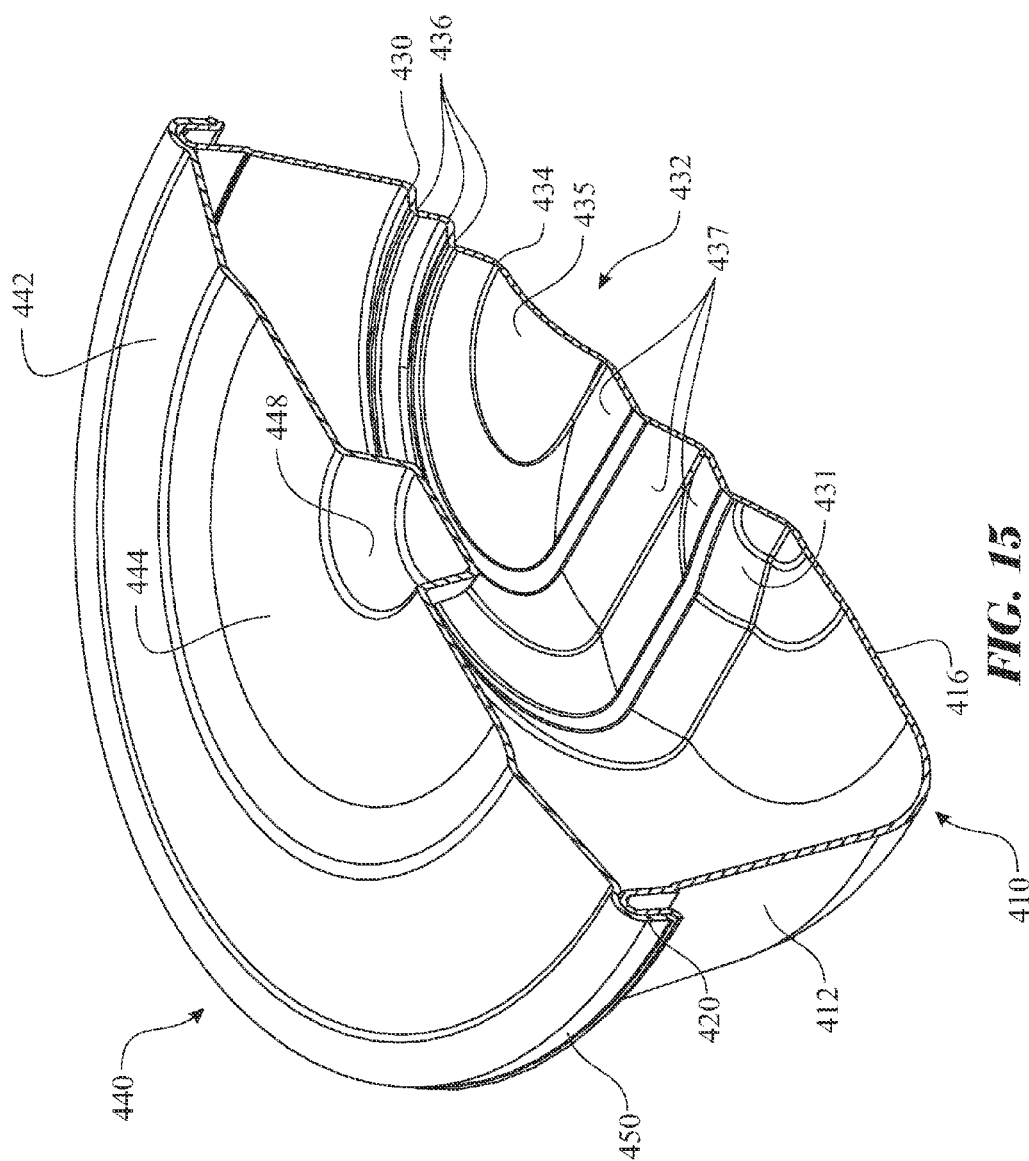


FIG. 13





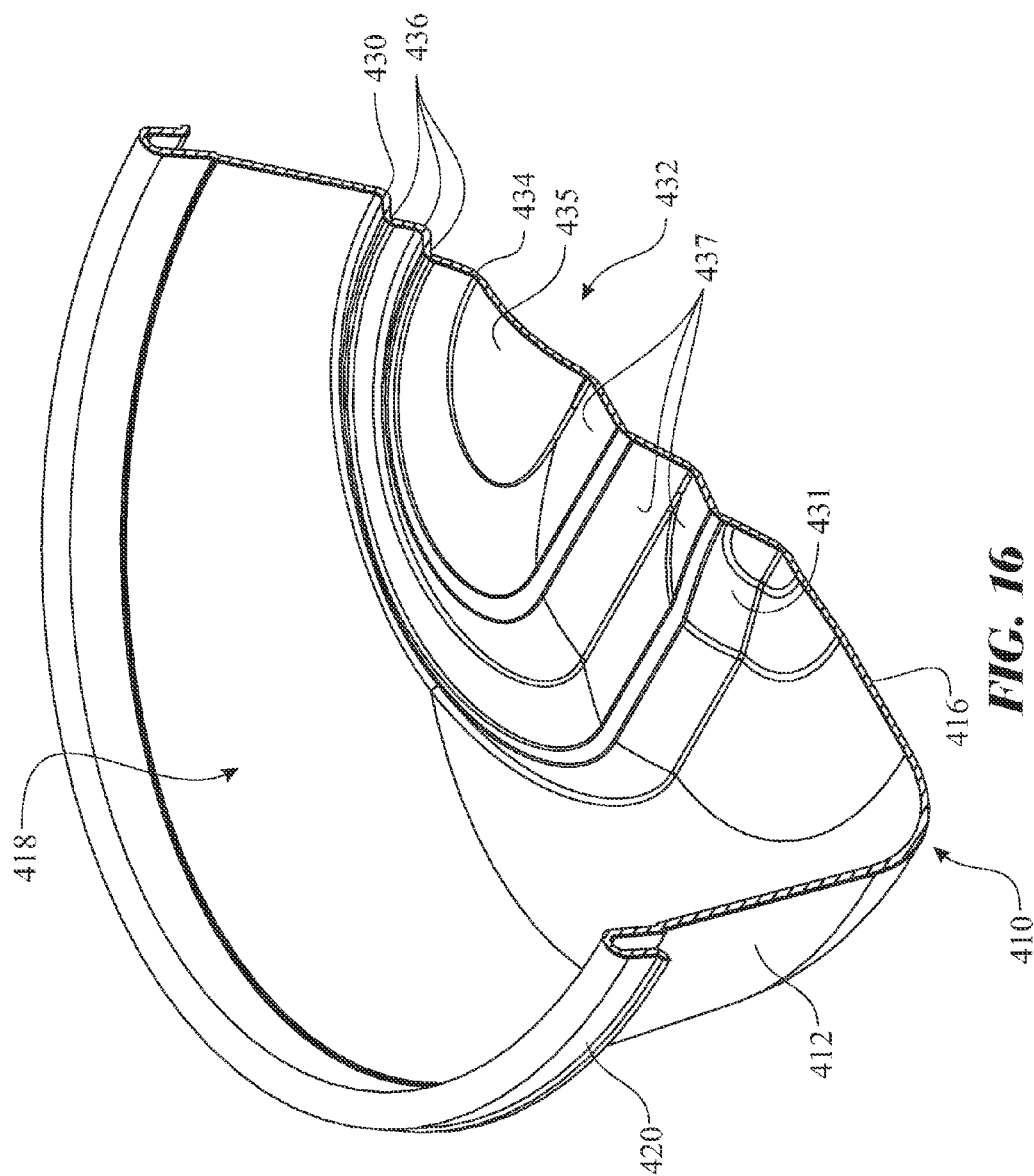
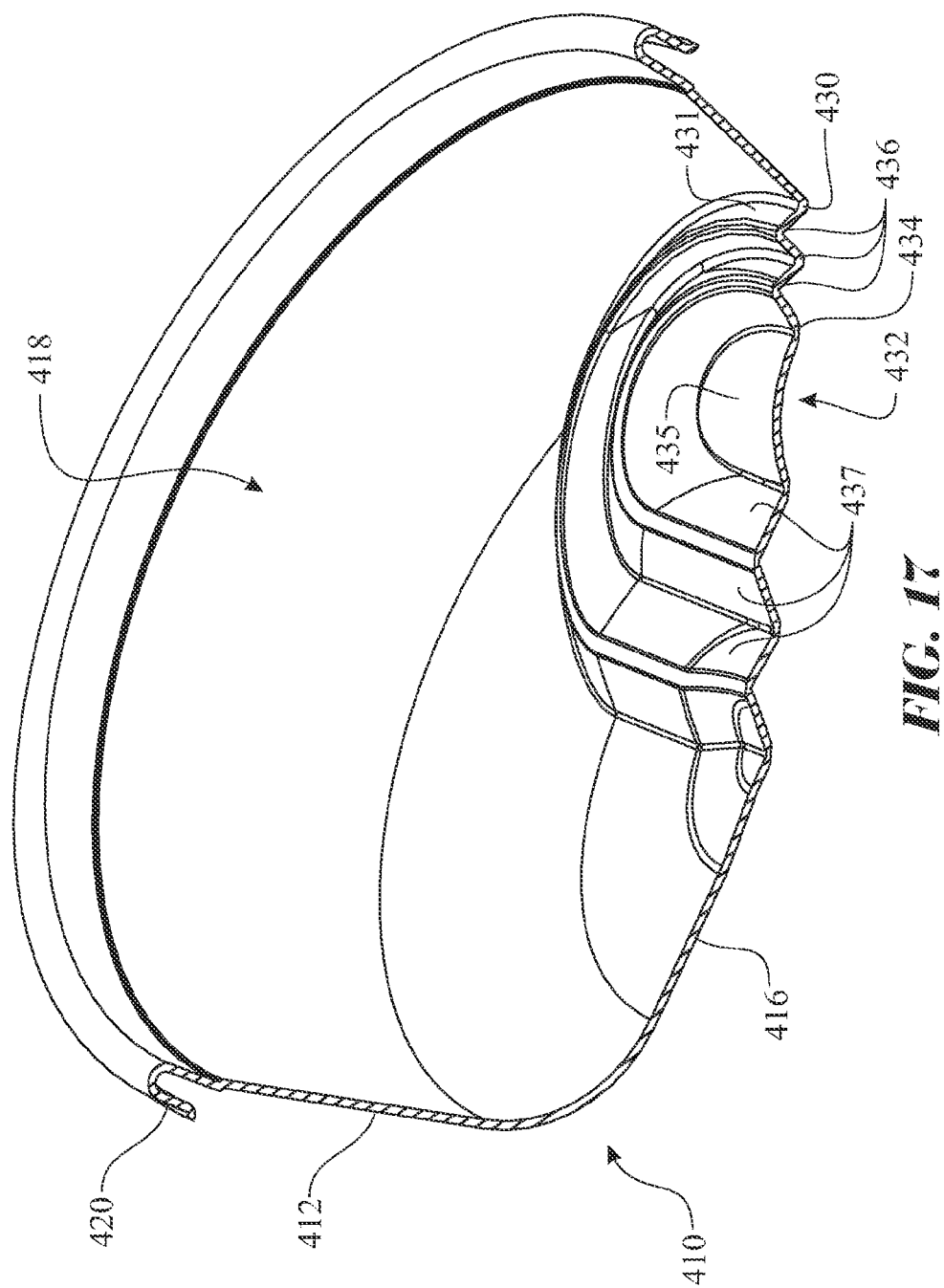
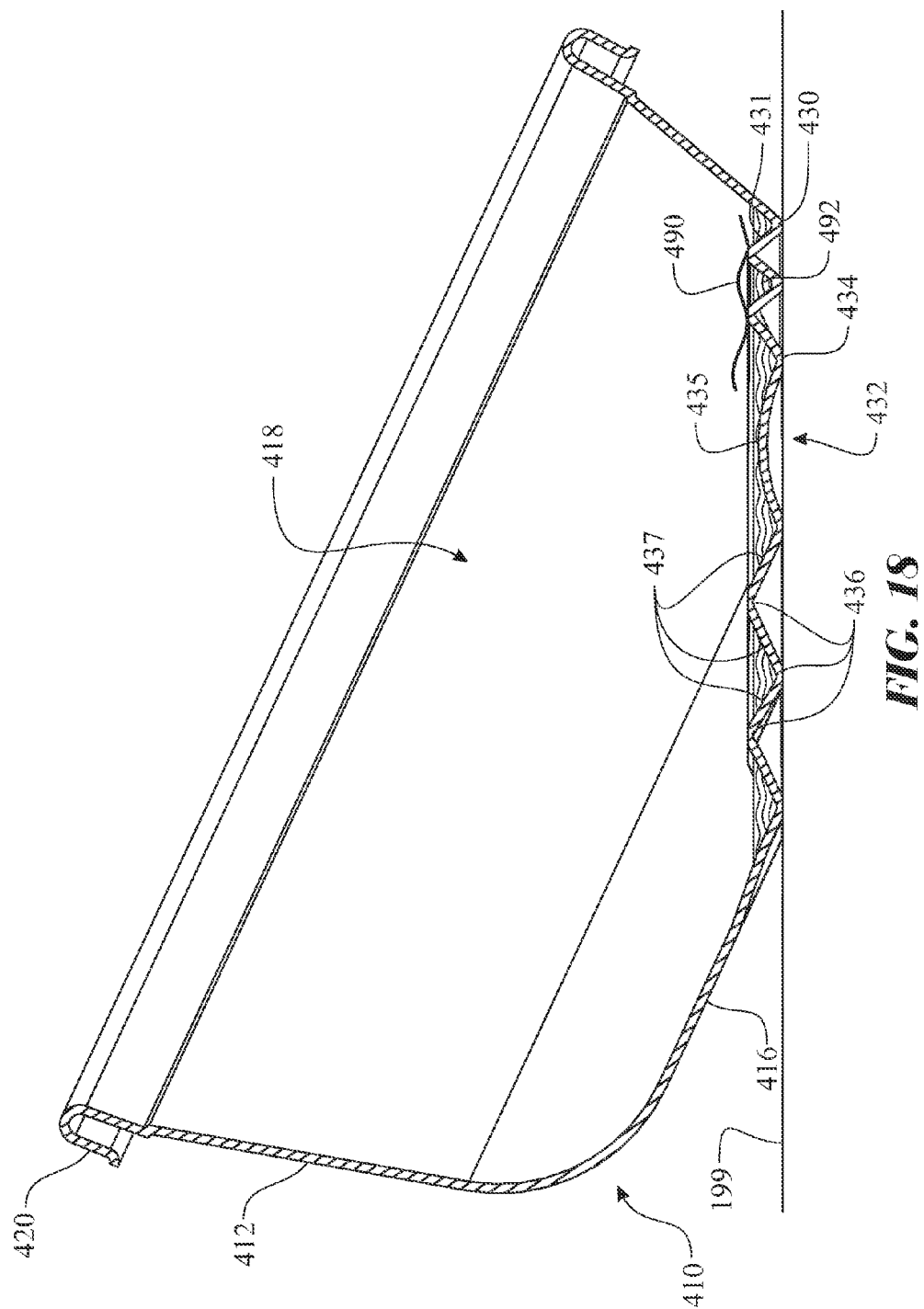


FIG. 16





1

STORAGE AND SERVING CONTAINER HAVING CONVERTIBLE BASE

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This Non-Provisional Utility Application is a Continuation-In-Part, claiming the benefit of U.S. Non-Provisional Utility application Ser. No. 13/728,994 filed on Dec. 27, 2012 (scheduled to issue on Mar. 31, 2015), which claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 61/580,638, filed on Dec. 27, 2011, which is incorporated herein in its entirety.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a carry out cuisine container and method of use, and more particularly, a carry out bowl having a convertible base, which enables a horizontally oriented configuration for transport and a non-horizontally oriented configuration for use during consumption of the contents therefrom.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Carry out food containers are commonly designed having a base or support surface and an upper or access opening defined by a perimeter or upper rim of the container to which a cover can be removably affixed. The base surface is normally parallel with the perimeter. This feature aids in the attachment of a cover onto the upper rim of the bowl. The cover, when attached to the rim of the container additionally enables stacking of two or more containers within a carry out bag.

When the customer arrives at their destination, they typically remove the cover from the bowl and either transfer the contents into a different serving container or eat the contents directly from the carry out bowl. When eating the contents directly out of the carry out bowl, the upper rim of the container defining the opening through which the user accesses the food contained therein is horizontal.

Several cuisines are best consumed by being scooped out of the bowl. One example is a rice dish. The dining party commonly tilts the bowl and draws the edible contents from the bowl using chopsticks.

Meals, such as salads, are commonly served with a side volume of a condiment, such as salad dressing. Adding the condiment to the entrée just prior to consumption of the meal is desirous for certain cuisines. Placing salad dressing upon a salad a substantial time prior to consumption of the salad can cause the greens and other ingredients to lose their desired crisp texture over time. Currently, the condiment is stored in a condiment container and placed into the carry out bag. If multiple orders are placed within a single carry out bag, the consumer then needs to match the correct condiment with the associated carry out container. If the condiment and carry out containers are mismatched, the results could be detrimental to the consumer's dining experience.

Accordingly, there remains a need in the art for a carry out container that enables ease of packaging and transport, while also enhancing a dining experience.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention overcomes the deficiencies of the known art and the problems that remain unsolved by provid-

2

ing a method and respective apparatus for packaging and consumption of take out appetizers, entrees, and desserts.

In accordance with one embodiment of the present invention, the invention consists of a carry out container comprising:

a convertible bowl comprising:

a concave shaped shell defining a content receiving section, the shell having a bottom portion defining a planar support surface, a bowl sidewall extending upwards from a peripheral edge of the bottom surface, and an upper rim circumscribing an upper edge of the bowl sidewall and an opening of the content receiving section, the upper rim defining a stacking plane, wherein the stacking plane and the support plane are substantially parallel to one another;

a conversion demarcation defining a conversion section, the conversion demarcation defining an angled bowl support surface encompassing a portion of the bottom portion and a portion of the bowl sidewall; and

a bowl cover comprising:

a cover section having a peripheral edge, and

a rim attachment feature formed about the peripheral edge, the rim attachment feature being shaped and shaped for removable attachment between the bowl cover and the convertible bowl to retain contents within the carry out container.

In a second aspect, the conversion demarcation is provided in a "C" shaped cross sectional geometry.

In another aspect, the conversion demarcation is provided in a partially "C" shaped cross sectional geometry.

In another aspect, the apex of the conversion demarcation is oriented towards the content receiving section of the bowl.

In another aspect, the conversion demarcation encompasses a majority of the bottom portion.

In another aspect, the conversion section can include a series of demarcations formed to collapse the conversion section.

In another aspect, the conversion section can include a series of circular demarcations or fold lines to collapse the conversion section.

In another aspect, the conversion section can include a series of semi-circular demarcations or fold lines to collapse the conversion section.

In another aspect, the conversion section can include a series of formed demarcations or fold lines to collapse the conversion section, wherein the formed demarcations define segments having a circular or annular plan shape, a semi-circular plan shape, a "D" shaped plan shape, a triangular shape, a linear shape, a trapezoidal shape, a pentagonal shape, a hexagonal shape, an octagonal shape, and the like. The segments can include one or more of the various shapes to define a conversion section.

In another aspect, the conversion section can include a series of formed demarcations wherein the formed demarcations are off-centered from one another, to collapse the conversion section.

In another aspect, the conversion section can include a series of formed demarcations wherein the formed demarcations are concentric with one another, to collapse the conversion section.

In another aspect, the bowl cover further comprises a cover upper surface, wherein the upper surface provides a surface for supporting additional carry out containers.

In another aspect, the bowl cover further comprises a condiment container receptacle, the condiment container receptacle being provided in the cover upper surface.

3

In another aspect, the condiment container receptacle is contiguous with the cover, maintaining a seal for contents stored within the convertible bowl assembly.

In another aspect, the cover upper surface further comprises a recessed cover section, wherein a surface of the recessed cover section is positioned below a cover upper surface.

In another aspect, the bowl cover further comprises a condiment container receptacle, the condiment container receptacle being provided in the recessed cover section.

In another aspect, the convertible bowl assembly further comprises a condiment container assembly; the condiment container assembly comprises a condiment container and a condiment container cover.

In another aspect, the condiment container assembly comprises a container retention feature and the bowl cover further comprises a condiment container retention mating feature, wherein the condiment container retention feature engages with the container retention mating feature to retain the condiment container with the convertible bowl.

In another aspect, the condiment container retention feature is a recession formed at least partially circumscribing the condiment container and the container retention mating feature is a boss, which engages with the condiment container retention.

In another aspect, the condiment container retention feature is located to position the condiment container assembly enabling stacking of a second convertible bowl assembly upon the first convertible bowl assembly.

In another aspect, the convertible bowl assembly further comprising a recessed bottom surface to accommodate an attached condiment container assembly when stacked the convertible bowl assembly is placed upon a second convertible bowl assembly.

In another aspect, stacking of a first and a second convertible bowl assembly is enhanced by integrating a stacking base interface into the bowl bottom portion and a stacking cover interface into the cover upper surface.

In another aspect, the stacking base interface and mating stacking cover interface comprise a recess and a mating boss respectively.

In another aspect, the stacking base interface and mating stacking cover interface comprise a recessed cylindrical shape and a mating bossed cylindrical shape respectively.

In another aspect, the stacking base interface and mating stacking cover interface comprise a recessed vertically oriented tubular shape and a mating bossed vertically oriented tubular shape respectively.

In another aspect, the stacking base interface and mating stacking cover interface comprise a recessed ring and a mating bossed ring respectively.

Introducing another embodiment, a method of use includes the steps of:

depositing an edible content into a convertible carry out container;

sealing the convertible carry out container by attaching a bowl cover to the convertible carry out container;

depressing a conversion section of the convertible carry out container inward to create a support surface which positions an upper edge of the convertible carry out container to a non-horizontal orientation;

removing the bowl cover from the convertible carry out container;

placing the convertible carry out container upon a support surface; and

consuming the edible content from the edible content.

In another aspect, the method further comprises steps of:

4

depositing a volume of a condiment into a condiment container assembly; and

inserting the condiment container assembly into a condiment container receptacle forming within the bowl cover.

In another aspect, the method further comprises a step of: securing a second convertible bowl assembly onto an upper surface of a first convertible bowl assembly by securing a stacking cover interface and a stacking base interface together.

These and other aspects, features, and advantages of the present invention will become more readily apparent from the attached drawings and the detailed description of the preferred embodiments, which follow.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The preferred embodiments of the invention will hereinafter be described in conjunction with the appended drawings provided to illustrate and not to limit the invention, in which:

FIG. 1 presents an isometric, exploded assembly view of an exemplary convertible carry out bowl;

FIG. 2 presents a front, exploded assembly elevation view of the convertible carry out bowl originally introduced in FIG. 1, illustrated in a carry out configuration;

FIG. 3 presents a front, assembled elevation view of the convertible carry out bowl originally introduced in FIG. 1, illustrated in a carry out configuration;

FIG. 4 presents a front, assembled elevation view of the convertible carry out bowl originally introduced in FIG. 1, illustrated in an initial conversion step of being transformed into a tilted configuration, for employment during consumption of edible contents stored therein;

FIG. 5 presents a front, assembled elevation view of the convertible carry out bowl as converted in FIG. 4, illustrating the tilted configuration and positioned for employment during consumption of the edible contents stored therein;

FIG. 6 presents a sectioned exploded assembly side view of the exemplary convertible carry out bowl originally introduced in FIG. 1;

FIG. 7 presents a sectioned assembled side view of the exemplary convertible carry out bowl as previously presented in FIG. 6 with the cover engaged with the bowl rim;

FIG. 8 presents an enhanced version of the convertible carry out bowl introducing an exemplary stacking interface feature, the illustration presenting a pair of stacked bowls in an exploded assembly view;

FIG. 9 presents the convertible carry out bowl of FIG. 8, illustrating a pair of bowls in stacked configuration; and

FIG. 10 presents an isometric view of a lid comprising an alternative integrated dressing storage and serving configuration.

FIG. 11 presents an isometric view of another enhanced version of the convertible carry out bowl, wherein the enhancement introduces an accordion expansion and collapsing design;

FIG. 12 presents a bottom plan view of the enhanced version of the convertible carry out bowl originally introduced in FIG. 11, wherein the illustration presents a bottom view describing the accordion expansion and collapsing design;

FIG. 13 presents a side elevation view of the enhanced version of the convertible carry out bowl originally introduced in FIG. 11, wherein the illustration presents a side elevation view describing the accordion expansion and collapsing design;

FIG. 14 presents a sectioned isometric side view of the enhanced version of the convertible carry out bowl originally

5

introduced in FIG. 11, wherein the illustration presents the convertible carry out bowl in an expanded, carry out configuration;

FIG. 15 presents a sectioned isometric side view of the enhanced version of the convertible carry out bowl originally introduced in FIG. 11, wherein the illustration presents the convertible carry out bowl in a collapsed, serving configuration prior to removal of the container lid;

FIG. 16 presents a sectioned isometric side view of the enhanced version of the convertible carry out bowl originally introduced in FIG. 11, wherein the illustration presents the convertible carry out bowl in the collapsed, serving configuration following removal of the container lid;

FIG. 17 presents a sectioned isometric side view of the enhanced version of the convertible carry out bowl originally introduced in FIG. 11, wherein the illustration presents the convertible carry out bowl in the collapsed, being rotated into a serving orientation with the collapsed section becoming the bottom, supporting surface of the carry out container; and

FIG. 18 presents a sectioned isometric side view of the enhanced version of the convertible carry out bowl originally introduced in FIG. 11, wherein the illustration presents the convertible carry out bowl in the collapsed, being rotated into a serving orientation with the collapsed section becoming the bottom, supporting surface of the carry out container.

Like reference numerals refer to like parts throughout the several views of the drawings.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The following detailed description is merely exemplary in nature and is not intended to limit the described embodiments or the application and uses of the described embodiments. As used herein, the word “exemplary” or “illustrative” means “serving as an example, instance, or illustration.” Any implementation described herein as “exemplary” or “illustrative” is not necessarily to be construed as preferred or advantageous over other implementations. All of the implementations described below are exemplary implementations provided to enable persons skilled in the art to make or use the embodiments of the disclosure and are not intended to limit the scope of the disclosure, which is defined by the claims. For purposes of description herein, the terms “upper”, “lower”, “left”, “rear”, “right”, “front”, “vertical”, “horizontal”, and derivatives thereof shall relate to the invention as oriented in FIG. 1. Furthermore, there is no intention to be bound by any expressed or implied theory presented in the preceding technical field, background, brief summary or the following detailed description. It is also to be understood that the specific devices and processes illustrated in the attached drawings, and described in the following specification, are simply exemplary embodiments of the inventive concepts defined in the appended claims. Hence, specific dimensions and other physical characteristics relating to the embodiments disclosed herein are not to be considered as limiting, unless the claims expressly state otherwise.

A convertible bowl assembly 100 is presented in various configurations in the illustrations of FIGS. 1 through 7. The convertible bowl assembly 100 includes a convertible bowl 110 and a bowl cover 140. The convertible bowl assembly 100 can be further enhanced by optionally integrating a condiment container receptacle 148 into the bowl cover 140 for receiving and retaining a condiment container assembly 160.

The convertible bowl 110 comprises a concave shaped shell sidewall 112 extending upward from a peripheral edge of a bowl bottom portion 116 and terminating at an upper opening rim 114. An interior portion of the concave shaped

6

shell sidewall 112 and bowl bottom portion 116 collectively define a bowl content receiving section 118 for storage of edible contents. A conversion demarcation 130 is formed within the convertible bowl 110 wherein the conversion demarcation 130 encompasses a portion of the concave shaped shell sidewall 112 and a portion of the bowl bottom portion 116. The conversion demarcation 130 defines a conversion section 132. It is preferred that the conversion section 132 includes a majority of the bowl bottom portion 116. The conversion demarcation 130 can be a “C” shaped formation or other shape to clearly identify a transition edge. The concave shaped shell sidewall 112 can include optional shaping such as scalloping to enhance the rigidity thereof, the aesthetics, and the like. The bowl bottom portion 116 defines a support surface when the convertible bowl assembly 100 is in a transport configuration. During transport, the bowl bottom portion 116 rests upon a support surface 199.

A cover attachment interface 120 is formed about the upper opening rim 114 for receiving the bowl cover 140 as best shown in the cross sectioned illustrations of FIGS. 6 and 7. The cover attachment interface 120 can be formed in any configuration, wherein the exemplary shape is an inverted “U”. It is understood that the cover attachment interface 120 can be formed in the shape of a bead, an “L”, and the like. The exemplary cover attachment interface 120 is shaped external to the bowl content receiving section 118, as the preferred configuration is easily fabricated using a vacuum forming process.

The bowl cover 140 comprises a cover section 142 extending across an interior defined by a rim attachment feature 150 as best shown in the cross sectioned illustrations of FIGS. 6 and 7. It is preferred that the cover section 142 extends upward forming a concave interior space. A cover upper surface 143 can be integrated into the shape of an upper portion of the curved cover section 142. The cover upper surface 143 defines a planar upper support surface for supporting objects stacked upon the bowl cover 140. The rim attachment feature 150 is shaped to include a rim receiving interface 152. The rim receiving interface 152 is sized and shaped to engage with the cover attachment interface 120. The bowl cover 140 is preferably fabricated using a vacuum forming process and designed to be slightly flexible, enabling releasable engagement between the cover attachment interface 120 and the rim receiving interface 152. A removal assisting lip 154 can extend outward from a lower edge of the rim receiving interface 152 to aid the user in removing the bowl cover 140 from the convertible bowl 110. The removal assisting lip 154 can be provided as a short tab extending from a portion of the peripheral edge of the rim receiving interface 152 or be contiguous about the entire peripheral edge of the rim receiving interface 152.

In use, the convertible bowl 110 is configured with the conversion section 132 extending outward placing the convertible bowl 110 into a portable configuration. The portable configuration orients the upper opening rim 114 horizontally, enabling placement of items onto a top surface of the convertible bowl assembly 100 in a substantially vertical orientation during transport from the restaurant to the dining location. The convertible bowl 110 is converted into a serving container by depressing the conversion section 132 inward towards the bowl content receiving section 118. The concave shaped shell sidewall 112 deforms along the conversion demarcation 130 forming a serving support surface. When served, the conversion demarcation 130 is placed upon the support surface 199. The serving support surface defined by the conversion demarcation 130 supports the convertible bowl 110, placing the upper opening rim 114 at an angle from

7

horizontal. The convertible bowl 110 is rotationally oriented placing the lowest portion of upper opening rim 114 closest to the user. The conversion section 132 may include pleats or other features to aid in collapsing the projected section of the bowl when undergoing the conversion process.

A condiment container assembly 160 can be included with the convertible bowl assembly 100 for storage and delivery of condiments or other additives for application upon or mixing with the stored consumable. The condiment container assembly 160 comprises a condiment container 162 and a condiment container cover 169. The condiment container 162 defines a condiment container contents receptacle 168 for receiving and storing contents therein. The condiment container cover 169 attaches to an upper edge of the condiment container 162 to seal a volume or quantity of the condiments within the condiment container contents receptacle 168. The condiment container 162 and condiment container cover 169 can be provided in any compatible shape.

A condiment container receptacle 148 can optionally be integrated into the upper surface of the bowl cover 140 for receiving and retaining the condiment container assembly 160. In the exemplary embodiment, the cover upper surface 143 further comprises a recessed cover section 144. The recessed cover section 144 is provided to accommodate a portion of the condiment container assembly 160 extending above the surface of the recessed cover section 144. The condiment container receptacle 148 extends downward from the recessed cover section 144. Both, the condiment container receptacle 148 and a sidewall of the condiment container 162 are preferably shaped as an inverted frustum to optimize fabrication as well as fit therebetween.

The condiment container assembly 160 can be retained within the condiment container receptacle 148 by including a retention interface therebetween. In the exemplary embodiment, a condiment container retention feature 166 can be integrated into the condiment container 162 and a container retention mating feature 146 can be integrated into the condiment container receptacle 148. The container retention mating feature 146 can be a ring, a boss, a series of bosses, and the like projecting towards a center of the condiment container receptacle 148. The condiment container retention feature 166 can be a recession formed about a circumference of the condiment container 162. When the condiment container assembly 160 is inserted into the condiment container receptacle 148, the container retention mating feature 146 engages with the condiment container retention feature 166 to retain the condiment container assembly 160 within the condiment container receptacle 148.

A bottom recession 117 can be included within the bowl bottom portion 116, wherein the bottom recession 117 provides sufficient space for the portion of the condiment container assembly 160 extending above the surface of the recessed cover section 144, when a first convertible bowl 110 is placed upon a second convertible bowl assembly 100.

An enhanced embodiment of the convertible bowl assembly 100 is presented as a convertible bowl assembly 200 and illustrated in FIGS. 8 and 9. Like features of the convertible bowl assembly 200 and convertible bowl assembly 100 are numbered the same except preceded by the numeral '2'. The convertible bowl assembly 200 includes an interface for aiding and retaining two or more convertible bowl assemblies 200 in a stacked configuration. The exemplary stacking interface includes a stacking base interface 215 shaped in a bowl bottom portion 216 of a convertible bowl 210 and a stacking cover interface 245 shaped into a cover upper surface 243 of a bowl cover 240. The stacking base interface 215 and stacking cover interface 245 can be of any reasonable shape, size,

8

and location to releasably mate together as desired. The stacking base interface 215 and stacking cover interface 245 can be provided in a recessed cylindrical shape and a mating bossed cylindrical shape respectively. The stacking base interface 215 and stacking cover interface 245 can alternately be provided in a recessed vertically oriented tubular shape and a mating bossed vertically oriented tubular shape respectively. In yet another option, the stacking base interface 215 and stacking cover interface 245 can be provided in a recessed ring and a mating bossed ring respectively.

In use, the serving party places edible contents into a bowl content receiving section 218 of the convertible bowl 210. A bowl cover 240 is removably attached to the convertible bowl 210 by engaging a rim receiving interface 252 of the bowl cover 240 with a cover attachment interface 220 of the convertible bowl 210, sealing the contents within the interior volume. Condiments or other additives are placed within an interior of a condiment container 262. The contents are sealed therein by attaching a condiment container cover 269 to an upper edge of the condiment container 262. A condiment container retention feature 266 is formed about a circumference of the condiment container 262. The condiment container retention feature 266 engages with a container retention mating feature 246 formed within a condiment container receptacle 248 of the bowl cover 240. The serving party inserts the condiment container assembly 260 into the condiment container retention feature 266 until the container retention mating feature 246 engages with the condiment container receptacle 248. The engagement between the condiment container retention feature 266 and the condiment container receptacle 248 retains the condiment container assembly 260 within the condiment container receptacle 248. This retains the condiment with the associated edible contents within the respective convertible bowl 210. The process is repeated with a second convertible bowl assembly 200. The second convertible bowl assembly 200 is attached to a bowl cover 240 of a first convertible bowl assembly 200 by engaging the stacking base interface 215 of the second convertible bowl 210 with the stacking cover interface 245 of the first bowl cover 240.

The convertible bowl assembly 100, 200 provides several advantages over the current art. The conversion demarcation 130, 230 enables the user to depress the conversion section 132, 232 to create an angled support surface, wherein the angled support surface tilts the upper opening rim 114, 214. The tilted upper opening rim 114, 214 improves the process of consuming the contents of the convertible bowl 110, convertible bowl 210. Currently condiment containers are placed within a carry out bag without any association with any of the convertible bowls 110, 210. The inclusion of the condiment container receptacle 148, 248 provides an interface for associating the respective condiment container assembly 160, 260 with the contents of the convertible bowl 110, 210. Stacking of a plurality of convertible bowl assemblies 100 can cause undesirable shifting of the convertible bowl assemblies 100 during transport. The convertible bowl assembly 200 provides an additional advantage where a bowl bottom portion 216 of a first convertible bowl assembly 200 is attached to a cover upper surface 243 of a second convertible bowl assembly 200. This eliminates any undesirable shifting during transport.

A bowl cover 340 integrates a condiment container 370 therein, as illustrated in FIG. 10. The bowl cover 340 is similar to the bowl cover 240, with the introduction of the condiment container 370. Like features of the bowl cover 340 and bowl cover 240 are numbered the same except preceded by the numeral '3'. The condiment container 370 is formed within the upper cover section 344 of the bowl cover 340. The

condiment container 370 includes a condiment sidewall 372 extending downward from a peripheral edge of the condiment container 370 formed within the upper cover section 344, and terminating at a condiment container base 374. Condiments, such as salad dressing, ketchup, mustard, tarter sauce, and the like, are dispensed into the condiment container 370. A condiment container cover 369 is secured to the lid coupling rim 378, retaining the condiment within the condiment container 370 until use. A plurality of dispensing grooves 376 is formed in the condiment container base 374. The dispensing grooves 376 enables the user to fracture the condiment container base 374 by applying a compression force onto the condiment container base 374, causing the dispensing grooves 376 to separate. In one method, the user can apply a force using a knife or other kitchen utensil. The fractured dispensing grooves 376 enables the dressing to pass through the condiment container base 374 onto the contents of the bowl. The user can then re-secure the condiment container cover 369 to the lid coupling rim 378 and shake the contents within the bowl to mix the dressing therewith.

A convertible container assembly 400 is an enhanced version of the convertible bowl or container assembly 100 and/or convertible bowl or container assembly 200, as illustrated in FIGS. 11 through 18. The convertible container assembly 400 is similar to the convertible bowl or container assembly 100 and/or the convertible bowl or container assembly 200, with the introduction of an accordion styled conversion section. Like features of the convertible container assembly 400 and convertible bowl or container assembly 100, 200 are numbered the same except preceded by the numeral '4'. A conversion section 432 is formed within a convertible container 410 of the convertible container assembly 400. The conversion section 432 enables conversion of the convertible container 410 from a carry out configuration, where the conversion section 432 is extended outward and a serving configuration (as best shown in FIG. 14), where the conversion section 432 is collapsed inward forming an accordion shape (as best shown in FIGS. 15 through 18).

The conversion section 432 includes a series of segments enabling the section to collapse in an accordion fashion. In the exemplary embodiment, the conversion section 432 is bound by or defined externally by a primary conversion demarcation 430. A portion of the primary conversion demarcation 430 extends across a portion of a concave shaped container shell sidewall 412 of the convertible container 410 and a second portion of the primary conversion demarcation 430 extends across a portion of a container bottom portion 416 of the convertible container 410. The primary conversion demarcation 430 preferably defines an outer resting area for the convertible container 410 when the conversion section 432 is collapsed into the serving configuration. The conversion section 432 would be shaped to offset the center of gravity of the convertible container 410 to stably maintain the convertible container 410 in a desired serving position (as shown in FIG. 18) during use.

the conversion section 432 includes a series of offset semi-circular segments, more specifically, a outer conversion demarcation 431 extending as an annular shaped segment between a primary conversion demarcation 430 and a first intermediary demarcation 436, a series of intermediary conversion segments 437 extending between adjacent intermediary demarcations 436 (with an interior intermediary conversion segment 437 extending between one intermediary conversion segment 437 and an adjacent inner conversion demarcation 434, and a inner conversion segment 435 defined within an interior of the inner conversion demarcation 434.

In use, the convertible container 410 would initially be configured having the conversion section 432 extended outward, placing the convertible container 410 into a carry out configuration. Contents, such as a serving of food, leftovers, and the like, would be placed into the convertible container 410. A bowl cover 440 would be secured to the convertible container 410 engaging a rim attachment feature 450 of the bowl cover 440 with a cover attachment interface 420 of the convertible container 410. The bowl cover 440 can include a condiment container receptacle 448 or any other suitable condiment storage feature. It is understood that any of the above described condiment storage and/or serving features can be incorporated into the bowl cover 440.

If desired, the user can transfer a condiment, such as a salad dressing, into the container content receiving section 418. The user would reseal any opening and shake the container to mix the condiment with the other contents residing within the container content receiving section 418.

Prior to serving, the user would apply a compression force to the conversion section 432 (preferably to the inner conversion segment 435), causing the conversion section 432 to collapse inward in accordance with the preformed demarcations 430, 434, 436. The segments would transition from an extended configuration (as shown in FIG. 14) into an accordion configuration (as shown in FIGS. 15 through 18). The user would remove the bowl cover 440 from the convertible container 410 either prior to or preferably after reconfiguring the conversion section 432. The user would place the collapsed section of the conversion section 432 of the convertible container 410 upon a support surface 499, tilting the convertible container 410 as shown in FIG. 18, and begin consuming the contents therefrom.

The accordion formation at the base of the convertible container 410 can elevate food 490, such as lettuce, above liquids 492, such as salad dressing.

Although the exemplary embodiment is formed having a series of offset semi-circular demarcations 430, 434, 436, it is understood that any suitable shape can be used to provide a collapsible section 432. The conversion section 432 can comprise a series of generally linearly shaped segments, triangular shaped segments, trapezoidally shaped segments, arched segments, pentagonally shaped segments, hexagonally shaped segments, octagonally shaped segments, and the like.

It is understood that the same concept can be applied to home ware, wherein the convertible container base 110, 210, 410 can be configured in a storage configuration for storing contents and converted into a serving configuration for serving contents. The convertible container base 110, 210, 410 can additionally include a second series of demarcations, wherein the second series of demarcations would be similar to the series of convertible demarcations 432, but oriented being parallel to the convertible container bottom surface 116, 216, 416. When compressed, the second series of convertible demarcations are collapsed, the convertible container base 110, 210, 410 is collapsed into a storage or portable configuration having a reduced volume.

The above-described embodiments are merely exemplary illustrations of implementations set forth for a clear understanding of the principles of the invention. Many variations, combinations, modifications or equivalents may be substituted for elements thereof without departing from the scope of the invention. Therefore, it is intended that the invention not be limited to the particular embodiments disclosed as the best mode contemplated for carrying out this invention, but

11

that the invention will include all the embodiments falling within the scope of the appended claims.

ELEMENT DESCRIPTION REFERENCES

Ref. No. Description

100 convertible bowl assembly
110 convertible bowl
112 concave shaped shell sidewall
114 upper opening rim
116 bowl bottom portion
117 bottom recession
118 bowl content receiving section
120 cover attachment interface
130 conversion demarcation
132 conversion section
140 bowl cover
142 cover section
143 cover upper surface
144 recessed cover section
146 container retention mating feature
148 condiment container receptacle
150 rim attachment feature
152 rim receiving interface
154 removal assisting lip
160 condiment container assembly
162 condiment container
166 condiment container retention feature
168 condiment container contents receptacle
169 condiment container cover
199 support surface
200 convertible bowl assembly
210 convertible bowl
212 concave shaped shell sidewall
214 upper opening rim
215 stacking base interface
216 bowl bottom portion
217 bottom recession
218 bowl content receiving section
220 cover attachment interface
230 conversion demarcation
232 conversion section
240 bowl cover
242 cover section
243 cover upper surface
244 recessed cover section
245 stacking cover interface
246 container retention mating feature
248 condiment container receptacle
250 rim attachment feature
252 rim receiving interface
254 removal assisting lip
260 condiment container assembly
262 condiment container
266 condiment container retention feature
268 condiment container contents receptacle
269 condiment container cover
340 bowl cover
342 cover section
343 cover upper surface
344 recessed cover section
345 stacking cover interface
346 container retention mating feature
348 condiment container receptacle
350 rim attachment feature
352 rim receiving interface
354 removal assisting lip

12

360 condiment container assembly
362 condiment container
366 condiment container retention feature
368 condiment container contents receptacle
5 369 condiment container cover
370 condiment container
372 condiment sidewall
374 condiment container base
376 dispensing grooves
10 378 lid coupling rim
400 convertible container assembly
410 convertible container
412 concave shaped container shell sidewall
414 upper opening rim
15 416 container bottom portion
417 bottom recession
418 container content receiving section
420 cover attachment interface
430 primary conversion demarcation
20 431 outer conversion demarcation
432 conversion section
434 inner conversion demarcation
435 inner conversion segment
436 intermediary demarcation
25 437 intermediary conversion segment
440 bowl cover
442 cover section
444 recessed cover section
448 condiment container receptacle
30 450 rim attachment feature
490 food
492 liquid
499 support surface

What is claimed is:

- 35 1. A convertible container body, said convertible container body comprising:
 - 40 a concave shell, said shell concave having a bottom surface, a planar support surface integral with said bottom surface, and a bowl sidewall extending upwardly from a peripheral edge of said bottom surface, said bottom surface and said bowl sidewall collectively defining a content receiving section, wherein an upper edge of said bowl sidewall forming an upper rim circumscribing and defining an opening of said content receiving section,
 - 45 said upper rim is substantially parallel to said support surface and defining a stacking plane, and
 - at least one conversion demarcation, said at least one conversion demarcation being a flexible formation that segments said concave shell defining a depressible conversion section, said at least one conversion demarcation substantially defining a plane angularly disposed from said bottom surface and encompassing a combined portion of said support surface and said bowl sidewall,
 - 50 wherein, in a fill configuration, said depressible conversion section is extended outward, away from said content receiving section of said convertible container body having said convertible container body resting on said planar support surface and in a consumption condition, said depressible conversion section is depressed inward, towards said content receiving section of said convertible container body having said convertible container body resting on said conversion demarcation.
 - 55 2. A convertible container body as recited in claim 1, wherein said at least one conversion demarcation is a single
 - 60 conversion demarcation.
 - 65 3. A convertible container body as recited in claim 1, wherein said at least one conversion demarcation includes a

13

series of conversion demarcations, including an outer conversion demarcation and an inner conversion demarcation.

4. A convertible container body as recited in claim 1, wherein said at least one conversion demarcation includes a series of conversion demarcations, including an outer conversion demarcation, at least one intermediate conversion demarcation, and an inner conversion demarcation.

5. A convertible container body as recited in claim 1, wherein said at least one conversion demarcation includes a series of conversion demarcations, wherein when said depressible conversion section is depressed inward, said series of conversion demarcations form an accordion shaped convertible container body support surface.

6. A convertible container body as recited in claim 1, wherein said at least one conversion demarcation includes a series of conversion demarcations, wherein at least one conversion demarcation of said series of conversion demarcations is offset from at least another conversion demarcation of said series of conversion demarcations.

7. A convertible container body as recited in claim 1, wherein said at least one conversion demarcation includes a series of conversion demarcations, wherein at least one conversion demarcation of said series of conversion demarcations is concentric with at least another conversion demarcation of said series of conversion demarcations.

8. A convertible container body as recited in claim 1, wherein said an apex of said conversion demarcation is oriented towards said content receiving section of said convertible container body.

9. A convertible container body, said convertible container body comprising:

a concave shell, said concave shell having a bottom surface, a planar support surface integral with said bottom surface, and a bowl sidewall extending upwardly from a peripheral edge of said bottom surface, said bottom surface and said bowl sidewall collectively defining a content receiving section, wherein an upper edge of said bowl sidewall forming an upper rim circumscribing and defining an opening of said content receiving section, said upper rim is substantially parallel to said support surface and defining a stacking plane, and

at least one conversion demarcation, said at least one conversion demarcation being a flexible formation that segments said concave shell defining a depressible conversion section, said at least one conversion demarcation substantially defining a plane angularly disposed from said bottom surface and encompassing a combined portion of said support surface and said bowl sidewall,

wherein, in a fill configuration, said depressible conversion section is extended outward, away from said content receiving section of said convertible container body having said convertible container body resting on said planar support surface and in a consumption condition, said depressible conversion section is depressed inward, towards said content receiving section of said convertible container body having said convertible container body resting on said conversion demarcation,

wherein said depressible conversion section would be shaped to offset a center of gravity of said convertible container body to stably maintain said convertible container body in a desired serving position during use.

10. A convertible container body as recited in claim 9, wherein said at least one conversion demarcation is a single conversion demarcation.

11. A convertible container body as recited in claim 9, wherein said at least one conversion demarcation includes a

14

series of conversion demarcations, including an outer conversion demarcation and an inner conversion demarcation.

12. A convertible container body as recited in claim 9, wherein said at least one conversion demarcation includes a series of conversion demarcations, including an outer conversion demarcation, at least one intermediate conversion demarcation, and an inner conversion demarcation.

13. A convertible container body as recited in claim 9, wherein said at least one conversion demarcation includes a series of conversion demarcations, wherein when said depressible conversion section is depressed inward, said series of conversion demarcations form an accordion shaped convertible container body support surface.

14. A convertible container body as recited in claim 9, wherein said at least one conversion demarcation includes a series of conversion demarcations, wherein at least one conversion demarcation of said series of conversion demarcations is offset from at least another conversion demarcation of said series of conversion demarcations.

15. A convertible container body as recited in claim 9, wherein said at least one conversion demarcation includes a series of conversion demarcations, wherein at least one conversion demarcation of said series of conversion demarcations is concentric with at least another conversion demarcation of said series of conversion demarcations.

16. A convertible container body as recited in claim 9, wherein said an apex of said conversion demarcation is oriented towards said content receiving section of said convertible container body.

17. A method of serving contents from within a convertible container body, comprising steps of:

obtaining said convertible container body, said convertible container body including:

a concave shell, said concave shell having a bottom surface, a planar support surface integral with said bottom surface, and a convertible container body sidewall extending upwardly from a peripheral edge of said bottom surface, said bottom surface and said convertible container body sidewall collectively defining a content receiving section, wherein an upper edge of said convertible container body sidewall forming an upper rim circumscribing and defining an opening of said content receiving section, said upper rim is substantially parallel to said support surface and defining a stacking plane, and

at least one conversion demarcation, said at least one conversion demarcation being a flexible formation that segments said concave shell defining a depressible conversion section, said at least one conversion demarcation substantially defining a plane angularly disposed from said bottom surface and encompassing a combined portion of said support surface and said convertible container body sidewall,

wherein, in a fill configuration, said depressible conversion section is extended outward, away from said content receiving section of said convertible container body having said convertible container body resting on said planar support surface and in a consumption condition, said depressible conversion section is depressed inward, towards said content receiving section of said convertible container body having said convertible container body resting on said conversion demarcation; and

depositing content into said container content receiving section of said convertible container body;

depressing a conversion section of said convertible container body inward to create a support surface which

15

positions an upper edge of said convertible container body to a non-horizontal orientation;
placing said depressed conversion section of said convertible container body upon a support surface; and
extracting content from content receiving section of said convertible container body. 5

18. A method of serving food within a convertible container body as recited in claim 17, said at least one conversion demarcation comprising a series of conversion demarcations, the method further comprising a step of: 10
depressing said series of conversion demarcations.

19. A method of serving food within a convertible container body as recited in claim 17, said at least one conversion demarcation comprising a series of conversion demarcations, the method further comprising steps of: 15
depressing said series of conversion demarcations; and
forming an accordion shaped bottom shaped convertible container body support surface.

20. A method of serving food within a convertible container body as recited in claim 19, the method further comprising a step of supporting content upon an upper, peak portion of said accordion shaped bottom shaped convertible container body support surface and allowing a liquid to collect within a lower, valley section of said accordion shaped bottom shaped convertible container body support surface. 25

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16